

Message

From: Kaiser, Steven [kaiser.steven@epa.gov]
Sent: 6/7/2017 2:47:39 PM
To: Carla Morgan (cmorgan@eastchicago.com) [cmorgan@eastchicago.com]; Joe Allegretti [joe@joeallegretti.com]; McCoy, Lisa [LMcCoy@idem.IN.gov]; Beth Admire [badmire@idem.IN.gov]
CC: Garypie, Catherine [garypie.catherine@epa.gov]; Toney, Marcy [toney.marcy@epa.gov]; Kyte, Larry [kyte.larry@epa.gov]; Nelson, Leverett [nelson.leverett@epa.gov]
Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips**US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs****June 7, 2017****Post Tribune****Officials: No 'system-wide' issues with East Chicago water
East Chicago votes to cut 112 school employees****NWI Times****East Chicago schools lay off 112 workers**

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-water-results-st-0607-20170606-story.html>

Officials: No 'system-wide' issues with East Chicago water**Craig Lyons** Post-Tribune**June 6, 2017**

While tests of East Chicago's water found some levels of lead, state officials said the results failed to indicate "system-wide" problems.

The results, released last week by Indiana Department of Environmental Management, confirmed that all of the 27 properties sampled had level of lead in the water but none went about the level of concentration that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says requires intervention, according to a press release. The tests found one property with lead levels that exceeded the allowed level of lead, according to IDEM, though subsequent tests had different results.

"There is no higher priority for this agency than the safety of Hoosiers, said IDEM Commissioner Bruno Pigott, in a statement. "As a result of these tests, I am confident that corrosion control is working and can say with certainty that no system-wide lead issues are present in East Chicago's drinking water system."

The EPA's regulation says that any concentration of lead above 15 parts per billion requires intervention.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, which submitted a petition to the EPA asking the agency to provide water filters or bottled water to all East Chicago residents, is still reviewing the IDEM's test results.

Anjali Waikar, a staff attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said she thinks the results preliminarily raise some questions about the methodology and study itself.

The state's study didn't appear to address an EPA pilot study, Waikar said. The EPA's study, whose results were released in December, found elevated levels of lead in the drinking water of residents of the Superfund site.

IDEM's study found at least one property that had about the 15 ppb limit during one test, Waikar said, but the other homes had at least some level of lead in the drinking water.

"We know no amount of lead is safe," Waikar said.

IDEM's messaging should address how East Chicago residents can safely drinking the city's water, Waikar said, but instead simply concluded it is safe to drink based on one test.

"People are being exposed to lead in drinking water and IDEM's follow up study confirms that fact," Waikar said.

IDEM's round of water testing also looked for levels of copper and orthophosphate, an anti-corrosion treatment, according to the state environmental agency, and found concentrations in line with federal requirements. IDEM said the properties all had levels of anti-corrosion agent above federally recommended amounts and pipes were thoroughly coated to prevent lead from leaching into the drinking water.

During the tests, IDEM drew three samples, according to a press release.

A disaster declaration signed in February by Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb and legislation entered by Rep. Earl Harris, Jr., D-East Chicago, both called for more extensive water testing throughout the city. East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland said, after a ceremonial signing of the legislation in May, that the state's commitment to more water testing is a first step in restoring the public's faith in East Chicago's water systems.

The city also began replacing lead service lines, prioritizing those in the Superfund site, according to the mayor.

"The results confirm what we have been saying from the start: Our water is of exceptional quality," said Mayor Anthony Copeland in a statement Tuesday. "It is our fervent hope that these tests end once and for all the unfair speculation that our city has been subjected to by those who are not fully informed as to what is going on. The results serve as concrete proof of the resolve of the city, the governor and the state to work together in addressing this issue."

In March, a group of advocacy organizations, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, petitioned the EPA to provide water filters and bottled water to residents throughout East Chicago. Water testing done by the EPA at the Superfund site show elevated levels of contaminants in the drinking water. The agency found that 18 of the 43 homes where the water was tested exceeded 15 parts per billion of lead – the EPA's threshold for water safety.

The petition asked the EPA to provide residents with free faucet filters or bottled water; test the city's drinking water; expand blood lead level testing for children; and review corrosion control measures. The request would prioritize actions at the Superfund site before expanding throughout the whole city. As the EPA is still considering the request, IDEM delivered water filters to residents of the Superfund site. The filter distribution was one part of a disaster declaration's action items.

IDEM said the agency, through a contractor, installed 654 filters, gave out 60 pitcher filters and provided 173 filters to residents who denied the contractors entry. IDEM said 22 residents refused filters and contractors could not contact residents of 237 properties.

Residents still needing a water filter can pick one up at the East Chicago Water Department, according to IDEM.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-ec-budget-cuts-june5-0606-20170606-story.html>

East Chicago votes to cut 112 school employees

Meredith Colias Post-Tribune

The East Chicago School Board voted to cut 112 employees from its payroll on Monday.

The decision on layoffs, which came on a unanimous voice vote, will include teachers at Central High School, Block Middle School, Carrie Gosch Elementary, Harrison Elementary, Lincoln Elementary and Washington Elementary schools, according to the meeting's personnel report.

It also includes high school coaches, paraprofessionals, maintenance, clerks, administrators and other staff.

Faced with a looming financial crisis, the district could look to cut up to \$3.2 million next year as it faces twin challenges: how to cope with the city's lead crisis and deal with the end of exemptions to state-mandated property tax caps in 2020.

Further cuts in 2018-19 and 2019-20 may also be likely.

Board Trustees Vanessa Hernandez-Orange and Dwayne Rancifer spoke on the difficulty of supporting painful layoffs and budget cuts.

Shea Marshall, representing Local 73 of the Service Employees International Union, said about 40 of his members received layoff notices.

"We think the layoffs are premature until we can take the numbers into account," he said during the meeting. "We will sit down and bargain over this. If there's way to save your job, we will find it."

Superintendent Paige McNulty has said the district has lost more than 400 students citywide since Mayor Anthony Copeland ordered 1,000 residents to leave Zone 1 of the U.S. Superfund site in the West Calumet neighborhood last summer.

To assist with that financial uncertainty, the state froze the district's enrollment count for two years. Once that ends in July 2018 – counting toward the 2018-19 school year—it would lose an estimated \$342,000 per month, according to officials.

Since August, the district has lost \$4 million directly due to the lead crisis, McNulty has previously said. Last month, voters rejected an operating referendum by nearly a 4-1 margin.

On Monday, nearly 200 people attended the board meeting, with several standing in the back of the room for the duration. Many speakers were upset by the cuts and asked why lower level employees would be more likely to face cuts than administrators.

Tara Adams, a former special education teacher, told the board that students would suffer if paraprofessionals and parent liaisons were cut.

"We have very valuable people that are now losing their jobs," she said. Now living in Hobart, she was a former resident in the West Calumet neighborhood.

"In the beginning (when the lead crisis became public), it was stated that the last thing to be affected would be our children," she said. "When you take vital people out of our classrooms (our children) are the first ones that will be affected."

Following the meeting, McNulty said the move was necessary to avoid falling into an untenable budget deficit.

"Obviously, this was not a decision that we made lightly," she said. "but we've lost...students, so we have to be as fiscally responsible as we can be."

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/education/east-chicago-schools-lay-off-workers/article_beb453d1-2fa6-53c8-9a0b-b7632c7c5344.html

East Chicago schools lay off 112 workers

- Carmen McCollum carmen.mccollum@nwi.com, 219-662-5337
-
- EAST CHICAGO — The East Chicago School Board voted to lay off 112 people at its meeting Monday night.

East Chicago schools Superintendent Paige McNulty said the cuts are the direct result of a decline in student enrollment, of more than 400 students in the 2016-17 school year and voters' rejection of a general fund referendum during a special election in May.

McNulty said the lack of additional operating money is going to impact all areas of the school district.

"We did not want to make these reductions, but we also had no choice as we prepare for the 2017-18 school year," she said. "Our school children, their families and the taxpayers in our community deserve additional funding from the state government and our community."

"Unfortunately, we cannot project additional funding from either before we start school in a few months. The School Board directed me to make cuts to ensure we were financially viable moving forward," McNulty said.

The superintendent also said there were staff laid off from every department, including administrators.

"We have lost 420 students and have called the students' parents who are coming here from out-of-district right now, and they plan on enrolling in their new district for this year. They just wanted to finish out the year with us. We will have lost 470 children altogether," McNulty said.

East Chicago School Board Vice President Vanessa Hernandez-Orange said the five-member board is responsible for making sure that children receive a quality education.

"We cannot do that if we keep working with a major deficit and continue to keep personnel in positions without adequate funding," she said in a news release.

"It is not fair to the kids, to their families and to our community. Some school districts continue to operate in the red and ignore the need to make changes to stay afloat. We will not do that • • — it is not fiscally or morally responsible. Based on my own personal experience, I understand, making the choice to reduce staff is extremely difficult. Unfortunately, with the loss of more than 400 students it is hard to continue to work at our current budget. I do not want to put our district in a situation where we will not be able to pay wages or have to cut programs for our students"